

Message Text

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TAGS: MASS, CG, BE, FR, US
SUBJECT: COORDINATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ZAIRE:
MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

REF: BRUSSELS 0167

SUMMARY: IN THEIR ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY THREAT TO ZAIRE, BELGIAN SPOKESMAN MINIMIZED DANGER POSED BY ANGOLA. THEY SAW CUBANS AND SOVIETS BEING EVENTUALLY DEFEATED BY TRIBAL RIVALRIES. KATANGAN GENDARMES WERE SEEN TO BE MORE A PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN MILITARY THREAT TO ZAIRE. GREATEST DANGER WILL LIE IN INTERNAL DISORDERS ABETTED BY LEFTIST FORCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE ZAIRE, WITH LIKELIHOOD THAT ANY POST-MOBUTU REGIME WILL REPRESENT RADICAL REACTION TO HIS POLICIES. PRIVATELY, CHIEF OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE LE BRUN EXPRESSED ANXIETY OVER RADICAL TREND OF EVENTS IN RWANDA AND EVIDENCE OF INSTABILITY IN BURUNDI. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS GENERAL REVIEW IN PLENARY SESSION OF THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL THREATS CONFRONTING PRESIDENT
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MOBUTU'S REGIME, LE BRUN CLAIMED THAT THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA IS WORSE TODAY THAN IT WAS DURING THE CONGOLESS CIVIL WAR, WITH THE POPULATION WITHDRAWING INTO THE BUSH, THE CITIES LACKING FOOD, A VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CADRES TO REPLACE THE PORTUGUESE, BLACK-MULATTO FRICTION, ETC. CONTRARY TO SOME REPORTS, BELGIAN CHARGE IN LUANDA CONCLUDES THAT POPULATION IS NOT PARTICULARLY

ANTI-CUBAN. BUT THERE SEEMS NO LIKELIHOOD OF AN EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF THE CUBANS BECAUSE WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE THREE MAIN TRIBAL GROUPINGS WILL CONTINUE. IF UNITA IS NOT PARTICULARLY ACTIVE, IT STILL CONTROLS LARGE AREAS OF THE SOUTH AND CAN INTERDICT THE BENGUELA RAILROAD EASILY GIVEN THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. MOBUTU AND PRESIDENT NETO HAVE, IN EFFECT, REVIEWED THE EARLIER AGREEMENT BETWEEN MOBUTU AND THE PORTUGUESE WHEREBY MOBUTU AGREED TO RESTRAIN THE FNLA IN EXCHANGE FOR RESTRAINT BEING EXERTED ON THE INSURGENT KATANGAN GENDARMES IN ANGOLA. LE BRUN PREDICTED THAT TRIBAL CONFLICT WOULD DEFEAT SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN THE END, AND IN MEANTIME REDUCED THREAT TO NAMIBIA AND ZAIRE. BUL HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER IMPLICATIONS OF UNFOLDING SITUATION IN RHODESIA AND SOUTHERN AFRICA ON REGIONAL FORCES AND FUTURE ROLE OF SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN AFRICA.

2. ON BALANCE, LE BRUN JUDGED THAT THE KATANGAN GENDARME THREAT WAS MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN MILITARY. THEY DO NOT, HE SAID, POSE "AN INSURMOUNTABLE MILITARY PROBLEM". THE MOVEMENT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY FRAGMENTED, AND JEAN BAPTISTE KIMBOUYE (PHONETIC) WHO RECENTLY CAME TO BRUSSELS FROM RWANDA, IS TRYING TO ARRANGE FOR REPATRIATION OF KATANGESE. EXILES HAVE INTERMARRIED AND IN PROCESS LOST THEIR MOTIVATION. NUMBERS HAVE RECENTLY CROSSED INTO SHABA BUT CAREFUL CHECK SUGGESTS VISITS HAVE BEEN FOR PERSONAL NOT SUBVERSIVE REASONS. THINNED RANKS OF KATANGESE

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(GENEROUSLY ESTIMATED AT 5,000) WERE SWELLED BY DEFLECTIONS AMONG ZAIRIAN TROOPS THAT WERE SENT TO FIGHT AGAINST MPLA.

3. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION, LE BRUN WAS INCLINED TO DISMISS POSSIBILITY THAT ARMY OFFICERS WOULD OVERTHROW MOBUTU, STRESSING FACT THEY WERE PRIVILEGED GROUP AND MANY FROM MOBUTU'S TRIBE. MAIN DANGER HE SAW WAS RADICAL PRESSURES BEING EXERTED FROM OUTSIDE AND INSIDE ZAIRE, WHICH COULD CAPITALIZE ON DOMESTIC UNREST TO TOPPLE REGIME. GENERAL BASTOGNE WAS LESS CONFIDENT OF LOYALTY OF MILITARY OFFICERS. BUT BOTH OFFICIALS CITED GENERAL BABIA AS TYPICAL OF NEW BREED OF DETRIBALIZED OFFICERS, WHO ARE FORMING TRIBE OF THEIR OWN IN REACTION AGAINST OLDER TRIBAL CLIQUES, AND CREATING BASIS FOR A MODERN ARMY.

4. IN DISCUSSING INSTABILITY ON ZAIRE'S BORDERS, LE BRUN EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER TREND OF EVENTS IN RWANDA

WHERE PRESIDENT HABIYAMANA IS TURNING INCREASINGLY TO SOVIETS AND LIBYANS IN SEARCH OF SOLUTION FOR HIS PROBLEMS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS REGARDING THE STABILITY OF BAGAZA REGIME IN BURUNDI. REPORT OF RECENT FIREFIGHT BETWEEN ARMY UNITS SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT SOME ELEMENTS OF ARMY FEEL THEY DID NOT RECEIVE DUE SHARE OF REWARDS FOR SUPPORT OF COUP. HE ASSUMED THAT FATHER BARAKANA WAS REAL INSPIRER OF THE COUP.

5. BELGIANS ARE OBVIOUSLY QUITE UNHAPPY OVER FORTH-COMING MOBUTU VISIT. THEY SEE THEMSELVES UNDER RENEWED PRESSURE TO EXTEND FURTHER AID AT TIME WHEN POOR ZAIRIAN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE HAS LED THEM TO SLOW DOWN ON EXTENSION OF CREDITS BY GOVERNMENT FINANCE AGENCY DUCROIRE. IN CONFIDENCE LE BRUN REPORTED THAT ZAIRE EMBASSY IS 20 MILLION BELGIAN FRANCS IN DEBT AND ZAIRE NEWS AGENCY ALSO NOT PAYING ITS BILLS. FIRESTONE

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